

Weekly Market Bulletin

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From Your Commissioner...

Plants You Can Eat and a New Neighborhood Farm

Rolling Green Nursery in Greenland is known for its selection of high-end nursery stock and flowering plants displayed in a park-like setting. This spring traffic is strong, sales are up—but the size of the typical purchase is down. The hot sellers this season are not big-ticket trees and shrubs, but bright-colored annuals and flats of vegetable plants. Owners Rick and Beth Simpson and their staff anticipated this trend, and increased veggie plantings dramatically.

Manager Tammy Hathaway says their customers don't want to hear about the ease of starting radishes and zucchini from seed. They just want the plants. Packs of pea plants, green beans, and yes, radishes and zucchinis are flying off the display tables. Rolling Green also offers no-work options for edible patio plantings, with large pots filled with caged tomatoes or combinations of vegetables and herbs. A new feature this season is the customer 'container creation station,' for do-it-yourself or custom planting of containers of any sort.

Carol Howe of Legacy Farm in Candia reports they also increased production of tomato and other vegetable plants this year, and they have sold out. By Memorial Day the Howes were just about cleaned out of spring plants of all sorts. Just a few petunias remained.

A beautiful display of plants drew me to the last working farm in Nashua, Sullivan Farm Greenhouses and Orchard, where I found mother-daughter team Kathy Sullivan Williams and Julie Sprague tending their remaining stock of colorful annuals and hanging baskets. Kathy is further diversifying the farm, which has been in her family for 100 years. They cleared the big, standard trees from the oldest orchard section, and replaced them with popular new apple varieties, plus 500 blueberry and 500 raspberry bushes.

At Strafford County Conservation District, Bambi Miller reports a highly successful plant sale fund-raiser. "Citizens now recognize a local food supply is very important and I would even add vital," she says. "We have seen people look to having food in their back yards. We had the highest sales on blueberries, strawberries and raspberries that we have had in years." Fruit trees also sold well.

Rockingham County Conservation District broke sales records with their plant sale. Christmas tree sales were down, reports Mary Currier, but fruit-bearing plants and plants for wildlife were hot-sellers. Vegetables were added this year, and sold like hotcakes.

Residents plan to produce a significant portion of their own food at the Nubanuset Neighborhood and Farm in Peterborough (<http://peterboroughcohousing.org/>), which celebrated completion of construction last week. New Hampshire's first co-housing community is organized around the life of a small organic farm in a country setting, just a short distance from downtown Peterborough. Now that the 29 homes and common facilities are built, and the majority of units are occupied, co-founder Shelley Hulbert says their focus is turning to getting the farm established. Vegetable beds are laid out, and two horses, a pony, a llama, five young pigs and two dozen laying hens are in residence. One family has

started another two dozen chicks. Two milk cows and a pregnant gilt will move into the barn shortly.

Folks at Nubanuset say they have “created an old-fashioned community in a new way,” organizing a tight-knit, intergenerational group of households around love of nature, and neighbors helping neighbors. Farmer-architect Sheldon Pennoyer of Greenfield designed the energy-conserving homes. Single-family, duplex and fourplex units are clustered to conserve open fields and woodlands. Vehicles are kept outside the residential area in open carriage sheds. A common wood-pellet heating system serves the whole neighborhood. A common house provides space for community meals and activities, and the property’s historic Governor Steele house is being renovated for office and business rentals.

Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner